

November 2001

Drinking from the Firehose-On the Nature of Keeping Things

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Recommended Citation

Cook, Eleanor I.; Paul, Sandra K.; and Simmonds, Albert (2001) "Drinking from the Firehose-On the Nature of Keeping Things," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 13: Iss. 5, Article 40.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.3240>

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mention the task of critically evaluating such materials. Add to this dilemma, that according to many sources, the volume of legal information is doubling every 22 months. The task of keeping track, let alone evaluating legal materials for your collection, is a daunting one at best and nearly impossible for the uninitiated.

Having spent the early part of my own career in academic law libraries (1983-1998), I, too, experienced firsthand the foibles and vagaries of managing law collections. When **Ken Svengalis** published his first guide, I was thrilled to have a tool for measuring and evaluating my collection authored by such a respected and commercially neutral member of our community. In the past, **Ken Svengalis**, Rhode Island State Law Librarian since 1982 and a law librarian for 23 years has been a long time "consumer advocate" for the law library community. Sited and honored on numerous occasions for his work, **Ken** pioneered the "write for order" method used in the past by librarians to control ever escalating subscription costs. During the 1980s he labored tirelessly to try to reach out to both the library and legal publishing community to effect product awareness, cost regu-

lation and sound business practices with regard to the world of legal publishing. No one is more suited to write such a manual as **Ken** has done with his *2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manuals*.

The 2001 edition follows a similar format to earlier editions but with an expanded coverage, including a treatise cost spreadsheet for over 1,300 titles including a cost comparison analysis for the past four years, to allow the reader to see and hopefully predict the rates of increases for the future. In addition, the organization of the manual allows the librarian to first grasp a bit of background on the world of legal publishing, FTC guidelines covering this industry. In chapter five he provides the all important criteria for evaluating and making decisions regarding the building and maintenance of a collection of legal materials. After covering the world of supplementation, **Ken** explores the world of common business practices utilized by the legal publishing industry such as unsolicited shipments and telemarketing with suggestions as to how librarians should respond to the various situations that regularly present themselves.

In part two of **Ken's** manual, the organizational focus shifts to the various categories of legal materials, beginning with federal and state statutes, moving on to digests, case reporters,

legal periodicals, citators, and even finding the law on the Internet. The standard format of the split page entries provide the author and title, the publisher, information of supplementation and alternate formats. The next section typically covers cost information on the different purchase options. Finally, the reader is provided with descriptive and evaluative information on the title. Beginning with chapter 26, the text turns to the evaluation of legal treatises and is organized by subjects such as civil rights, family and zoning law. Each publisher's offerings on each section of law are presented to facilitate evaluation and comparison. Chapter 27 features the various state specific publications for each jurisdiction and provides sources for online information. Finally, the manual's appendices feature legal publishers' company histories, addresses, and other contact information. Representative used lawbook prices, cost saving advice and a bibliography complete this essential guide to legal materials.

Rather than further rhapsodizing about the inherent values of the *2001 Legal Information Buyer's Guide and Reference Manual*, just let me say that if you have the need, and can purchase but one title of this type in the upcoming year, purchase the 2001 edition of **Mr. Svengalis's** book. You will not regret it. 🐼

Drinking From The Firehose — On the Nature of Keeping Things

by **Eleanor I. Cook** (Appalachian State University, Boone, N.C. 28608)

The inspiration for this column began this summer with my reading of **Nicholson Baker's** book *Doublefold*, but had its genesis even before that event I had a minor revelation during a Faxon-sponsored breakfast a few ALA's ago. Richard Rowe asked his guests to consider why archiving of electronic content was so important and what we were going to do to achieve this. I had an "ah ha!" moment while sitting in Faxon's hotel suite drinking coffee and nibbling on breakfast hors d'oeuvres, and Mr. Rowe spied my agitation and inquired about it. I think I shocked him. I said, "Well, we can't keep everything can we?" I had been thinking about the great Library of Alexandria and what a shame it was that it was destroyed, along with so many other wonderful collections across the ages. I realized in that instance: What does it really matter? And I did not have an answer. I intrinsically knew however, that anyone who thinks we should attempt to keep everything is wasting time. We all know people who would love to do this, even if they understand that practically, it's not possible. If we could have total access to the knowledge of the ages, what more might we understand today?

But in that instance, and later, while pondering **Baker's** book, I had to come to a conclusion: We can't keep everything - yet, we really want to. It's human nature. And humans have been dealing with this urge since we've walked upright.

In this world, there are the Keepers and the ThrowAways. Not everyone is a pure type of course - many of us have a blended set of genes

for this trait. (I am convinced it is influenced by genetics.) Most people who know me probably think I am a hopeless "Keeper," (my office appears to be a wreck), but it's more complex than that. You might be a Keeper and yet be entirely orderly in what you keep - others can be ThrowAways and yet be constantly in a state of confusion (and perhaps threw away that one thing that was really needed yesterday...). Keeping and ThrowAwaying may be combined with being orderly or chaotic, so think of it as a four-part matrix.

Librarians live at the heart of this tension as we manage collections of materials that have varying values for humankind. And not all librarians are Keepers, indeed not! So many of our colleagues really live to weed. You know they do. So does **Nicholson Baker**. And of course, he is the Czar of the Keepers!

I am the child of two extreme cases. My mother was a true ThrowAwayer and my Father was a chronic Keeper. As long as they were together, there was a semblance of balance in our household. My parents recognized these traits in themselves, and they respected each others' tendencies. In other words, they really worked together to keep things "normal." When my mother died in 1987, all hell broke loose and by the time my father died in 1996, their house was crammed with belongings beyond belief. It took me two years to clean it out. And it taught me a few things about the process of collecting a life worth of "stuff."



What does this have to do with libraries? Can't you see it? We are surrounded in our profession by people who have extreme tendencies. And depending on OUR tendencies, we are either fighting a battle or supporting a habit. These habits have an influence on what goes on in libraries, and it has a great deal to do with how we set policy, and how we are perceived by others outside our profession. Think about our most important donors - they tend to be Keepers who wish us to maintain their lovingly-collected treasures into perpetuity. Think about

the raging controversies many of us face about establishing off-site storage spaces, micro-filming of local newspapers, and weeding projects. These are real issues for us. And it all boils down to how we deal with these Keeper and ThrowAway tendencies that we have to manage - both within ourselves and in those who control and influence our budgets.

There is another aspect to all this that needs to be considered, and was brought to my attention by **Nicholson Baker's** book as well as my pondering at the Faxon Breakfast. That has to do with the nature of solutions to problems. Humans have a tendency to develop clever, though occasionally bizarre theories and then an urge to defend simplistic solutions based on those theories, applied to various huge obstacles in the way of our forward progress as a species. If we find a simple (not necessarily easy) answer, we wish to apply it to the most possible cases of the problem. These days, we praise people who think "outside the box," though for centuries before us that was not necessarily the case. Such tendencies eventually find us out on a limb, not sure what to do next (example - pes-

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Public Prayers: The Reverent Wishes and Desires of A Public Library Collection Development Librarian

by **Rodger Smith** (Collection Development Librarian, Charleston County Public Library)
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When I started my career in 1972, a solid periodical collection served as the core reference resource for most public libraries. Made accessible by the **Readers' Guide** and other specialized indices, a lengthy list of current paper subscriptions and a healthy backlog of indexed titles was like money in the bank. With smiles on our faces, we proudly led users needing information on the latest medical developments, companies and corporations, literary criticism, almost anything, to our indices, loose issues, bound volumes, and microforms. In the 1980s, and even into the 90s, as we tried to broaden and deepen the quality and quantity of information we were offering our community, our library added a wide variety of professional and research based journals in subject areas like business, engineering, and the sciences. Periodical rooms were the holy inner sanctums of public libraries. Obviously, times have changed.

The digital and Internet revolutions have changed everything. PCs now sit on every public service desk, offering our staff and patrons quick and easy access to a variety of general and specialized databases, plus a universe of subject specific Websites. These new electronic resources have proven to be accurate, reliable, and increasingly indispensable. Users are now unwilling to search through volumes of print indices, consult holdings lists, locate bound volumes, or load a reader-printer. Yet my public library, like many others, has maintained an impressive list of "important" print subscriptions. Cabinets continue to fill up with microforms. Because our collections contain fewer research journals, we have not faced the budget crises that have struck academic libraries. And the willingness of so many public library funding sources to provide additional monies for electronic resources has allowed us to ignore the growing irrelevancy of our large general research periodical collections. But even my relatively well funded institution can no

longer afford to provide a wide variety of electronic resources and a comprehensive print periodical collection.

In the upcoming months our Periodicals and Reference Staffs will be doing a title by title review of our periodicals collection. **Our goals are:**

1. Establish a core collection of titles which are essential to the cultural and intellectual record of our community. We will maintain current subscriptions, print or microfilm backfiles, and provide electronic access. Included in this collection will be titles such as **Time**, **Scientific American**, **Business Week** and specialized titles of local importance like the **Journal of Southern History**.
2. Establish a secondary collection of specialized subject-related titles of interest to our community, like the **Journal of Accountancy** or the **Journal of Educational Research**, for which we will try to establish some degree of electronic access. We will not maintain current print subscriptions or any backfiles to these titles. We believe that our access to subject related Websites and our online periodical databases will provide us with adequate resources to respond to infrequently asked questions about the subjects covered by these publications. We will be willing to pay for electronic access not included in any of our current databases to only a limited number of these titles. We will also consider various document delivery and pay per view solutions to requests for the specialized information covered by these titles. We are not retreating from any commitment to respond to the legitimate and important research, analysis, and opinions contained in these publications. We just will no longer collect and accumulate their physical volumes.
3. Establish a browsing collection of popular leisure reading titles with current subscriptions and backfiles limited to one or two

years of unbound print issues. Again, we trust our online periodical database and subject specific Websites to fill any needs we have for electronic access to and archiving of these titles.

In the end I do not foresee a significant reduction in our current subscriptions budget. We plan to roll any savings realized from the cancellation of marginal research titles into new subscriptions for leisure and hobby titles. I do hope that there will be a large reduction in our microfilm budget. But the most important result of all this effort will be a more responsible, realistic periodicals collection. Our collection will be a true archive of the print core intellectual record of our community. Our staff will be tending and caring for only items essential to that record. For everything else, in electronic we trust.

So these days as I fade in to sleep, I find myself praying for:

- Periodicals and Serials Librarians everywhere! God bless them and multiply their numbers. May they have always the knowledge, wisdom and patience to straighten the crooked and maximize accessibility in all their wonderful ways.
- Peace, love and cooperation among publishers, aggregators, database vendors. Please, can't you all just get along together and produce stable, consistent databases on which we can depend. We desperately need to be able to base our planning and budgeting on a stable title list.
- Simple, universal patterns of access to individual electronic subscriptions.
- Publishers, if you provide it and we have paid for it, why does it have to be so hard?
- The continuing patience, common sense, and good advice of our basic periodical vendors everywhere. Here's to the good old fashion subscription agent. Long may they live! 🍀

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ticides, or more recently - stem cell research). Often the so-called "solution" has unexpected side effects that compromise the situation. The **Library of Congress's** attempt at mass deacidification is a perfect case in point. No one faults them for trying to solve the problem, but once it became clear that the solution (DEZ) was worse than the problem, they needed to back off when instead they persisted. Another historical solution offered in Baker's book, the use of mummy linen wrappings as a substitution for linen and cotton rags to make paper, whether a joke, a myth or a fact, totally con-

vinced me that people are industrious beings who will come up with totally surprising ways to solve problems. It's great, isn't it? Well... sometimes not. Somebody had to come up with the insidious methods that achieved the efficient genocide tactics during World War II, and they applied their talents and creativity eagerly to that task. Just because a solution to a problem is found, that does not mean it is good for the planet.

You may wonder why I am focused on these ideas. What it comes down to is this: we need to be thinking in a big picture kind of way. Has the World Wide Web solved anything or simply added to the complexities of our lives? How DO we capture the valuable content that resides there?

How do we keep the electronic content we're

creating? Will anyone care if we do? Are the solutions being developed now going to make any difference in the future?

I think it's all bigger than us, today and in the future, and we have to be savvy enough to know that. Far too often our leaders make pronouncements that something recently developed will solve all our problems regarding [fill in the blank] and we know, yes, we KNOW, that is NOT TRUE.

And so, I ask you to read **Nicholson Baker's** book, regardless of what you think of his premises, his writing style or his credentials. So many of my colleagues have dismissed **Doublefold** out of hand, mostly because of the library media hype (mostly negative) and the

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Bremertown Postcard

Column Editor: **Tom Leonhardt** (International University Bremen)

In college, I majored in German. I studied the German language, linguistics, and literature and developed a fondness for all three but time to pursue only the literature once I took up a career and as my family grew. I cannot claim to have read all that many books in German after leaving college but I kept it up enough and in the past ten years or so have tried to pick up the pace. The more I read, the better my reading vocabulary became and the more eager I became to keep reading.

As long as I was working at a research library, I had no trouble finding good books to read and even at the **Oregon Institute of Technology**, I was able to find almost any title I sought by using the **Orbis** union catalog. Not only could I borrow books from the **University of Oregon**, I discovered that the **Reed College Library** contains a wonderful German literature collection. But some titles, not widely held, turned out to be on the shelves of the libraries at **Whitman College**, **Lewis and Clark**, **Willamette**, **University of Puget Sound**, and even **Oregon State University**, perhaps the last school, after **Oregon Tech**, where I would expect to find German novels in German. But then I remembered that **Bernard Malamud** once taught English at **Oregon State** (see his *A New Life* for details). As it turns out, the prophecy by some in the 1970s that approval plans will create identical collections everywhere, turns out to be a false prophecy and individual taste and discrimination prevails after all so that the German novel I need is found in a library I would not have considered and did not consider. Thanks to technology and library cooperation, **Orbis** found those books for me.

But finding books to read is not the same as finding books to buy and own and make notes in and admire on one's very own bookshelves. Borrowing someone else's books serves only one need. I wanted to buy books in German, novels, grammars, dictionaries, and more. But very few cities offer anything beyond dictionaries and phrase books. Happily, there were a few occasions each year or every year or so, when I could find at least a few titles to choose from and a few from those that met my needs and my budget.

When I lived in the Bay Area, I had a couple of choices. There was the **University of California** bookstore and there was **Cody's** upstairs where one can find German, Italian, Spanish, and French titles and maybe some other languages, too. And other bookstores along **Telegraph**, such as **Moe's**, might occasionally offer something in German. Otherwise, I would have to go to the City (San Francisco) and visit the **European Book Store** on Larkin between Post and Geary. This past summer **ALA** was in San Francisco, and even though I was visiting from Germany, I wanted to browse in the store and maybe find some language books about German from an American point of view. I found the store right where I expected it to be but it was boarded up and empty. I felt badly, not because I couldn't browse, that was a certainly a disappointment, but I mourned the loss of a wonderful independent book store that carried

a variety of non-English language books and learning materials for children and scholars and everything in between. There was no sign telling me that **European Books** was now in a new location. I would rather have paid for a cab to a more distant location than to know that the store was gone. I don't know why but I think I know and it is sad. It reminded me of the time I found **Kroch's** and **Brentano's** in Chicago vacant of books but inhabited by the literary and publishing ghosts. I know that **Saul Bellow** used to go there and probably **Studs Terkel**. **Lyman Newlin** is the person to ask but as I write this, it is only five a.m. and he should be resting up for his 92nd birthday party and not answering one of those awful-hour phone calls that should be reserved for emergencies only.

A few years ago I was spending a lot of time in Chicago. No matter what my business was and no matter which end of Michigan Avenue my hotel was located, I had four places I liked to visit, **Kitty O'Shea's Irish Pub** at the **Chicago Hilton** and **Towers**, **Rose's Records** and **Carl Fischer Music** (both gone now and both in the loop on Adams, I think), and **Europa Books** (832 N. State Street). **Kitty O'Shea's** and **Europa Books** are at opposite ends of Michigan Avenue and then over a couple blocks more to reach State Street. When staying at the Hilton, I would earn my pint(s) of Guinness by hiking up to the Europa and back with a heavier load than when I started. I don't know how many miles that is but with such rewards at each end (not to mention the exercise itself), it was worth it. When staying at a hotel at the northern end of the Miracle Mile, I would earn my pint(s) of Guinness by walking to the Hilton.

Since May 2001, I have been in hog heaven. **International University Bremen** is actually in a suburb called **Grohn** and the largest town (Bremen is a city state with town-like suburbs or neighborhoods) near **Grohn** is **Veegesack**. **Veegesack** has a pretty good bookstore, locally owned and operated, **Otto Buecher** (www.buecher-otto.de) is in the pedestrian zone with a selection that tends toward popular titles and line B fiction, travel, language, maps, children's, local history, etc. There is also a de-

cent selection of English language books, classics and mysteries for the most part. **Otto Buecher** has just the kind of atmosphere you look for in a bookstore with bins and shelves full of titles to browse and a friendly staff with computers at hand when you need help.

There is also an antiquarian book seller in **Veegesack**, **Antiquariat Bahr & Kemper**. Sadly, the selection for literature is wanting and the condition of too many of the books makes otherwise reasonable prices seem too high. Nevertheless, I was able to find a couple of volumes to buy and will buy some more the next time I visit there. I feel an obligation to buy at least one book any time I visit an antiquarian dealer.

Bremen city center (more or less) has several good bookstores. There are two, **Thalia** and **Phoenix** almost next door to each other and **Storm** books not too far away. But my favorite, discovered recently, is **Buchhandlung Geist**, a scholarly, language-oriented local book store containing just the kinds of books I have been looking for, literary classics (German), reference books, literary histories, and grammars. I have already spent more money in **Geist** on German books than I have in one visit since I was a graduate student. It felt good as I left the store with my heavy plastic bag of books. I plan to fill out my collection of **Duden**, both the regular and the small volumes, and the **Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag** history of German literature is now within my grasp, too.

To be honest, I had found sources on the Internet where I could order any German book I wanted and I did order a few and will order others once I return to the States, but in the meantime, I am having fun browsing and finding books that I don't really need but can't really resist. Ordering books by mail (let's face it, that is all you are really doing when you order from a Web site) can be fun and convenient and all that you have when outside a big city, but it will never replace a good bookstore, even those where you have to walk outside and up the street a couple of meters before finding a place to sit down and order **Aeinen Milchkafee und Apfelstrudel** to enjoy while examining those crisp new volumes. 🍷

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reviews (also mostly negative). Find what you will from these pages. I assure you if you take the time to read the book, you will ask yourself some surprising questions. If you are a regular reader of *Against the Grain* (and especially if you write for it) you owe yourself this task. **Tony Ferguson** took the time to read it, and his comments in the June issue of this journal were well considered and fair.

It is extremely important in this time of electronic content, that we focus on what it means to be saved for posterity. What posterity will be in the future could be something altogether different than what we have thought it was in the past. If we care about saving anything we

mount as a web site, digital content, or otherwise create in a format that requires a machine to access, we need to think about how this will be assured. Let's face it, if Baker's book inspired me to write this column, it just might be worth your time to read it. Trust me on that. 🌱

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the network; now the work doubles, as we develop **GE2** and think about today's users, and tomorrow's; and keep our eye on the competitors too. Much of **YBP** revolves around **GOBI**. Other companies have imitated it. Hundreds of libraries depend upon it. **GOBI** is a big success. **GE2** will make it new again. But some days we wonder, when did **GOBI** begin to own us? 🍷